

Royal Rumble 2016 Preview

This is one of the most difficult shows of the year to predict and it's not just because of the battle royal. Aside from the big main event, it's hard to guess a lot of the title matches because there's a chance that they're starting a new title program but they also might just be extending the current ones a few more months. Then there's the whole "let's throw the roster into one match for the title." Let's get to it.

We'll start on the pre-show with a nice little concept: a four way tag with the winning team getting Rumble spots. We've got Darren Young/Damien Sandow (So are the Players officially split?) vs. the Dudley Boyz vs. Ascension vs. Mark Henry/Jack Swagger. Ascension is written off of course and there's no reason to pick Young/Sandow. Therefore, we'll go with the only team remaining and the only one comprised of two former World Champions. Neither guy has a chance of winning but the more former World Champions you add to a World Title match the more prestige it has. If nothing else due to how lame the other options are.

Del Rio retains the US Title. Why? Well for some reason WWE insists on making us sit through as many boring Del Rio matches as we can while the title gets less and less interesting every single week. I had a good time believing that Kalisto could go somewhere as champion but in the back of my head I knew WWE would hand it back to Del Rio as soon as possible. I have no idea who takes it off him (AJ maybe?) but it's not going to be Kalisto at this show.

I'll go with Ambrose keeping the title from Owens. In theory Owens should be in line for a big match at Wrestlemania and I can't imagine they put the title on him beforehand. Last man standing is a good way to have him lose but still keep him looking strong as Dean could win through shenanigans after a long fight. As long as they don't do the lame and way overdone "trap him under some big object" ending, this should be a really wild brawl that both guys are capable of delivering. Ambrose wins, though both guys should be in the Rumble too.

In a pick that doesn't make a ton of sense, I'll go with the Usos to win

the titles off New Day. It's not that New Day isn't entertaining still (though the Jericho stuff has been horrible), but they've cleaned out the division more than once now so unless Enzo/Cass or Gable/Jordan are coming to the main roster like Monday or something, who else is New Day supposed to fight?

Charlotte retains, likely setting up a match against Sasha Banks as we roll into Wrestlemania, which could set up Bayley vs. Sasha on the main roster. Not that WWE is smart enough to pull that off of course. We're likely setting for the return of Nikki to challenge Charlotte in a copy of AJ returning to take the title from Paige in 2014.

That brings us to the main event and good night where do you start? Well actually you start with Reigns based on Monday, but I think it finishes with HHH. Yeah as simple of a story as they have, I really do think this winds up being HHH coming out in the last spot and defeating a worn out Reigns to win the title. However, I don't think it sets up HHH vs. Reigns at Wrestlemania. Instead I think they'll do that match at Fastlane and then set up Reigns vs. Lesnar II at Wrestlemania. I can't imagine they keep the title on Reigns as if nothing else, it leaves no one as a realistic challenger.

Now for the interesting parts: the surprises. Counting the two names from the pre-show, we'll have fifteen names announced. I won't bother trying to predict all fifteen as it's likely going to be one or two of the Social Outcasts and a bunch of midcard fillers plus HHH to cap it off. That leaves a handful of spots for legends and new names so here are a few guesses.

Word on the street is they're putting the Tough Enough winner in there for some hazing. If so, whatever. It'll take two minutes and no one is going to remember because Tough Enough winners barely ever mean anything because it's a stupid concept that doesn't work.

I don't think we get AJ Styles and I'd almost bet on the fact that we don't get Daniel Bryan. AJ likely debuts the next night or the next week and Bryan being in the Rumble would be a borderline disaster based on the last two years. Both guys would be fun, but the problem boils down to

this: what's the point of bringing them in if they're just going to lose?

For legends picks, let's go with Jim Duggan and.....Papa Shango. Why? Well why not? If they can bring in the Boogeyman last year, why not bring in Shango here? I'll throw in Vader too, just so the announcers can make a lame Star Wars joke.

Finally, I'll go with Sami Zayn as the NXT representative. The fans know who he is and he can go right back down to NXT to build towards Sami vs. Balor at Takeover.

Overall, this is always a show worth looking forward to. The Rumble is one of the few matches that is always fun due to the drama and surprises included and this has the potential to be something awesome. I like the idea of putting the title on the line as it really does feel like the biggest Rumble of all time. Reigns is likely dropping the belt here to set up his big win at Wrestlemania, but this has the potential to throw a huge curveball. I know HHH vs. Reigns is likely at some point, but there's always the chance that it could go another way.

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